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Mines and mud mar Cambodia roads

The end of March marked the start of a year-long repatriation campaign in Cambodia — one of the largest repatriation operations ever undertaken by the United Nations. Yet huge stretches of Cambodian secondary roads and parts of the 400-kilometre Route 5, which connects Poipet on the Thai border with Phnom Penh, are so deteriorated they are barely usable, even in the present dry season. These roads must be repaired before they can accommodate the influx of expected refugees.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) designed and recently launched a massive emergency road rehabilitation plan in Cambodia to rebuild the main arteries for transporting the 370,000 Cambodian refugees returning from border camps in Thailand.

With the impending heavy rains in August and the expected arrival of 6,000 bus loads and 3,000 truck loads of returning refugees from Thailand over the next year, road construction crews are racing against time.

The Government of Sweden pledged $5 million to UNDP for the immediate rehabilitation of roads. UNDP designed and is now managing the extensive reconstruction programme, based on surveys carried out late last year by UNDP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the UN Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC).

The Royal Thai Army began work on the first 30-kilometre stretch of Route 5 between the Thai border and Sisophon in early February. UNDP will be contracting an UNTAC Thai Battalion for the rehabilitation of the next 70-kilometre stretch which runs from Sisophon to Battambang. Engineers are currently surveying the road conditions south of Battambang. Their findings will be used by UNDP in developing an extended work plan for continued road rehabilitation.

In addition, UNDP will be mobilizing funds from the donor community for other emergency activities. More road mines will have to be cleared and bridges will need to be rebuilt. Route 6, which runs parallel to Route 5, and secondary roads leading to resettlement sites also need reconstruction. The total programme is expected to cost $15 million.

Electoral assistance to Albania

The Government of Albania requested technical assistance from UNDP for administrative, organizational and logistical support for Albania's general elections held late last month. UNDP experts advised Albania's Central Electoral Commission and provided more than $70,000 in office equipment for organizing and tabulating votes.

From 9 March - 5 April, UNDP electoral experts prepared lists of voters, and provided logistics for the printing and distribution of ballot papers, ballot boxes and ballot booths. The UNDP team also issued instructions to electoral agents at various district levels. Working closely with the Central Electoral Commission and the ad hoc Secretariat to the Prime Minister's Office, UNDP helped in briefing and organizing more than 100 foreign observers.

On 23 March, one day after the elections were held, the results of the Democratic Party victory were presented to the Central Electoral Commission. By internationally accepted standards, the election was conducted in a free, fair and orderly manner.

Feeding the world, protecting the environment

Developing countries will need to produce three per cent more food every year, just to keep pace with expanding population and demand growth, said experts from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) at a special UN briefing on 1 April. Panelists presented strategies to help the world feed itself without destroying the environment.

CGIAR, jointly sponsored by UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the World Bank, has 16 agricultural research centres around the world. The centres have been instrumental in the "Green Revolution" which has increased crop yields and developed disease and drought-resistant food plant varieties in developing countries.

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"Environmental preservation and increased farm production can be compatible goals," said panelist Gustavo Nores, Director-General of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture. "But this requires that agriculture in developing countries be sustainable. That is, food production must increase at a rate that will feed twice as many people in 40 years while preserving our most precious asset, the natural resource base that will sustain future generations."

To meet this challenge, the centres have conducted research on protecting and enhancing soil fertility while increasing productivity, better managing water resources, and using biological means rather than chemical solutions to control pests.

Drought devastates Southern Africa

The worst drought of this century has hit Southern Africa. Both Zambia and Zimbabwe have been declared national disasters. Malawi, Mozambique and Namibia risk dangerous food shortages. Lack of fodder for livestock in Zimbabwe could severely hurt livestock exports.

In response to the emergency, UNDP Resident Representatives in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi have formed task forces in their respective countries to assist governments in assessing food needs and coordinating food aid. In New York, UNDP has also established a task force to monitor the drought crisis, help coordinate UN emergency assistance, and explore funding possibilities for the region.

Liberia programme urges food production instead of food aid

UNDP's Office for Project Services will expand logistic support to war-torn Liberia to help the government in its national rehabilitation and reconstruction programme. UNDP's new 1992 activities will extend humanitarian assistance to target groups, mainly women and children who have been hardest hit by the country's civil conflicts. In addition, UNDP will help Liberia shift from free food distribution programmes towards long-term food production.

Civil strife began in Liberia in December 1989. More than 750,000 Liberian fled to neighbouring countries, and another 1.5 million were displaced within Liberia. In July 1990, the UNDP Resident Representative in Liberia and a skeleton staff moved to Conakry, Guinea. From there, they coordinated the UN system's response to the humanitarian needs of Liberian refugees. In November 1990, UNDP returned to Liberia to assist with the start of the UN relief activities.

The expanded relief efforts will include the provision of drugs and medical services to displaced Liberians and returning refugees. The World Food Programme will provide 3,000 tonnes of rice, which will be sold locally. The proceeds will be used to procure additional non-food relief commodities such as tools, educational materials, medicine and condoms to help prevent HIV/AIDS. UNDP will be contracting with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to handle the food distribution. These NGOs will include the Special Emergency Life Food (SELF) and Liberians United to Serve Humanity (LUSH).

Approved projects

(all projects subject to modification; sums quoted in US dollars)

Brazil — The Training Centre for Economic Development (CENDEC) of the Institute of Economic and Social Planning (IPEA) supports policy seminars and courses on public policy, social reforms, environment issues and trade. It has become a forum for democratic debate on public policies.

The Government of Brazil requested assistance from UNDP to strengthen policy analysis and strategic planning at IPEA and the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Planning. The project will design a data base which will provide basic information required to carry out studies and research, and also improve maintenance of IPEA's archives. In addition, 100 professionals and civil servants of IPEA and the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Planning will be trained in the areas of public policy, environmental issues and project formulation and evaluation.

Proposed UNDP contribution: US$309,000. Government cost sharing: US$1,236,009. Funds will be used for international and national consultants in human resources development, government planning, economic growth and social equity, development financing and debt negotiation. Training programmes and equipment will also be provided. Government executed and implemented by the Institute of Economic and Social Planning. (BRA/87/017)

Cambodia — The Department of Civil Aviation was disbanded in 1975 and all civil aviation documents destroyed. It was reestablished in 1979 and managed by foreign experts until 1986. Since then, it has been managed by nationals with insufficient training. Air traffic controllers have limited experience in monitoring more than two or three aircraft at a time, and operate with inadequate manuals and reference materials. Without adequate tower management guidelines and aircraft repair skills, the air traffic operations in the country fall below acceptable international standards. Measures to provide the essential safety of air operations are needed immediately, especially with the planned arrival of UN personnel to oversee repatriation of refugees.

To restore the air transportation sector to international standards, UNDP will first upgrade the air traffic control capabilities at the Phomn Penh airport. Through project support, obsolete equipment will be replaced to ensure safe air traffic operations. Air traffic control services at the Battambang, Siem Reap and Stung Treng airports will then be upgraded. UNDP experts will also help establish standard procedures for air traffic operations, and provide on-the-job training and English language courses to air traffic controllers.

UNDP contribution: US$2,365,600 for a civil aviation adviser, consultants for equipment installation and specifications, air traffic

control procedures and fire service. An air traffic control manager and instructor, a UNV aviation English instructor, fellowships, study tours and equipment will also be provided. Executed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and implemented by the Department of Civil Aviation. (KAM/91/010)

Colombia — Rapid urbanization in Colombia has caused severe housing shortages. Nearly 800,000 families are homeless and two million houses need substantial improvements.

The government turned to UNDP to help consolidate the complex institutional arrangements of the urban development and housing sector. UNDP was also requested to strengthen management and operations of the governmental departments involved with housing. UNDP will study the impact of the national social housing policy on municipalities and housing institutions. It will provide training in methods for assessing housing demand. UNDP will also promote low-cost housing technologies among Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Proposed UNDP contribution: US$380,000. Government cost sharing: US$651,085. Funds will be used for international and national professionals in management, finance and administration, housing construction, information systems and urban development. Equipment for computerized information systems will be provided. Executed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT) and implemented by the National Planning Department. (COL/89/003)

Panama — The Government of Panama established a Reform of the Public Sector Programme to reactivate the economy after the 1988 political crisis. The reforms are aimed at restructuring public enterprises, reducing public spending and encouraging private investment in public sector services. The government requested technical assistance from UNDP to carry out the reform programme in four sectors: telecommunications, ports, electricity and water and sewage.

Project support will help implement the privatization of the National Telecommunications Institute. Procedures for processing licenses to new investors in the port sector will be established, along with a regulatory system for port development. The organizational structure of the Hydraulic and Electric Resources Institute will be streamlined, and a tariff structure for providing electrical services will be revamped. UNDP will revise the administrative structure of the National Water Supply and Sewage Institute to improve efficiency and financial management.

Funds will provide international and national experts in port tariffs, engineering, and economics, and consultants in management and planning. The project will fund sub-contracts for institutional strengthening and financial consulting. Computers and office equipment will also be provided. Government executed and implemented by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy. (PAN/92/003/PAN/92/004/PAN/92/005/PAN/92/007)

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Paraguay — Paraguay is firmly committed to modernizing its public administration. Part of this activity involves restructuring and simplifying administrative procedures to improve municipal efficiency. UNDP will help revamp the human resources policy governing the selection, recruitment, training, promotion and management of municipal workers. It will establish training capacities in the areas of transportation, environmental protection, urban development and social affairs.

UNDP contribution: US$101,300. Government cost sharing: US$970,874. Funds will provide international and national consultants in public administration, human resources, urban development, environmental protection, transportation and social services. Equipment for data-processing will also be procured. Government executed and implemented by the Municipal Government of Asuncion. (PAR/91/008)

Viet Nam — Textile and clothing is Viet Nam's second largest industry, and is a vital source of foreign exchange. Lack of spare parts for textile industry machinery hampers production, causes textile plant closings, and impedes potential growth in textile exports.

This project will establish a self-supporting demonstration production foundry and pattern workshop at the textile engineering factory in Thu Duc. The foundry will manufacture spare parts and serve as a Centre for Technology Transfer to the textile industry. It will be financially independent through its sale of spare parts, and its provision of advisory services to other industries.

UNDP will support the applied research and development of the foundry, and provide personnel training.

Proposed UNDP contribution: US$1,212,710 for a foundry engineer, metallurgist, design expert, laboratory equipment, fellowships and study tours. Executed by the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and implemented by Ministry of Light Industry and Union of Production. (VIE/92/006)

Regional Projects

RAF/92/G31 — This East African regional project for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda will help ensure protection of biodiversity by strengthening the conservation programmes of relevant environmental institutions. UNDP will assist in creating biodiversity units within leading national agencies responsible for natural resource preservation. Institutional capabilities for collecting, analyzing and disseminating biodiversity data will be upgraded. Research and training in conservation will be improved and expanded.

Global Environment Facility funding: US$10 million. Funds will be used for training, research and consultants. Executed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO). Implemented by participating governmental agencies or NGOs.

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